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Montana Book Award goes to Larry Watson

The 2013 Montana Book Award winner is *Let Him Go* by Larry Watson, published by Milkweed Editions. The acclaimed author's ninth book of fiction takes place in North Dakota and Montana.

"Watson manages to tell a story that is riveting in its many twists, one that turns from sweetness to sorrow with an amazing economy," writes the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*.

This annual award recognizes literary and/or artistic excellence in a book written or illustrated by someone who lives in Montana, is set in Montana, or deals with Montana themes or issues. Presentations and a reception with the winning authors will take place on April 10, during the Montana Library Association Conference in Billings.

Three honor books were also chosen by the 2013 Montana Book Award Committee:

- *Black Helicopters* by Blythe Woolston, published by Candlewick Press.
- *The Lovebird* by Natalie Brown, published by Doubleday.
- *Opportunity, Montana: Big Copper, Bad Water, and the Burial of an American Landscape* by Brad Tyler published by Beacon Press.

MORE CONGRATS TO ...

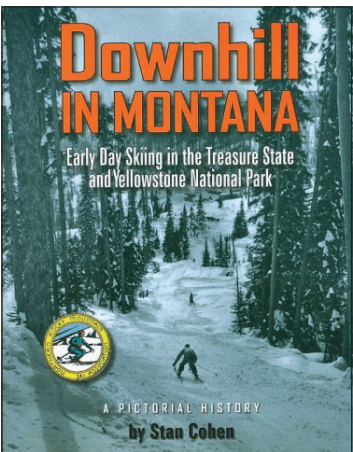
The Hi-Line's yodeling, singing cowboy **Wylie Gustafson**, who joins the Classics Philharmonic Orchestra in "Beethoven 'n' Friends Go Country," April 24-25 and April 27 at the Balboa Theatre in San Diego. The concerts – four for kids and one for families – feature music inspired by "country" and cowboy culture, including works by Beethoven, Rossini, and Grofe. Gustafson seasons the performances with yodeling, old-time country and cowboy songs.

Helena musician **Bruce Anfinson**, who was named 2013 Hospitality Hero by the Helena Chamber of Commerce for his Last Chance Ranch Waggonride Dinner Show. According to the chamber, "Anfinson truly embodies the spirit of hospitality. He is involved and supportive of

all aspects of tourism for Helena, and has himself become an attraction worth bragging about in the Helena area." His Last Chance Ranch escorts guests, via horse-drawn wagons, to the Moose Cabin and Tipi, where guests are served gourmet meals, back-country beauty and ample entertainment. "But Bruce's hospitality doesn't stop there," notes the chamber. "He offers a unique experience that no one else in his industry offers ... by providing live music in a way only he can."



Bruce Anfinson accepts his Hospitality Hero award from the Helena Chamber of Commerce. (Photo by Eliza Wiley/ Independent Record)



Downhill in Montana by Stan Cohen

Missoula publisher and author **Stan Cohen**, whose book, *Downhill in Montana, A Pictorial History of Early Day Skiing in the Treasure State and Yellowstone National Park*, and a companion DVD, won the Skade Award from the International Skiing History Association. Cohen, along with three other authors from the U.S., will receive the award April 3 during Skiing History Week in Park City, UT. Cohen also won the Ullr Award from the ISHA in 2000 for *Downhill Skiing, A Pictorial History*. Cohen has authored or co-authored 70 books and published more than 350 during his 37-year career.

The **Arts Council of Big Sky**, which was named 2013 Non-Profit Ally of the Year by the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce, an accomplishment it credits to "the dedication of our board of directors, business sponsors, private foundations and individual donors." The council, founded in 1989, offers the Music in the Mountains summer series, the Big Sky Classical Music Festival, the Peggy Dicken Schwer Memorial Fund Dinner Concert series, and debuted a winter concert series at the new Warren Miller Performing Arts Center this year.

Willson Auditorium in Bozeman, which received a \$300,000 donation from the Gilhousen Foundation to fuel its efforts to renovate the aging theater. The donation received in January raises the total received so far to \$2.5 million. The Bozeman School Foundation hopes to raise \$3.5 million by the end of March to fix up Bozeman's largest performance space. So far, more than \$100,000 has been raised through the foundation's "Take a Seat" campaign; the Murdock Charitable Trust gave a matching grant of \$200,000; and an anonymous donor gave \$1 million. That's in addition to community donations large and small.

The **Montana Museum of Art and Culture (MMAC)** at The University of Montana in Missoula, which was prominently featured in a program that aired Dec. 24, 25 and 28 on the A&E Television Network. The "Plastic Whale Project" came to Missoula last October, courtesy of the cable television show, "Shipping Wars." Museum director Barbara Koostra told the *Missoulian* that the free exhibit was made possible because of the show, but the reason for the display had to be kept secret. The episode that was broadcast in December shows the challenges of shipping the 32-foot-long gray whale from Thurston County, WA, to Missoula, where more than 700 people saw it. A Washington artist created the whale to educate people about the effects of plastic waste on the environment. But the filming was a bonus. "It was a triple-win situation for us," Koostra said. "The whale project was fun as an art piece that fit our mission as a museum; it was an exciting way for Missoula to have some national play and for UM to be the stage – literally the stage – for the setting of the episode."

– *The Missoulian*, Dec. 26

The **Hockaday Museum of Art** in Kalispell and **Whitefish Theatre Company**, who were among six Flathead Valley recipients of grants from the BNSF Railway Foundation. Whitefish Theatre Company received \$2,500, and the Hockaday was presented with a check for \$10,000 to support further restoration of 15 murals, originally created to decorate Glacier National Park lodges. The first two fully restored murals are on permanent display at the museum in the mezzanine gallery.

TRANSITIONS

Welcome to **Anne Marie Brinkman**, who recently took the baton as executive director of the International Choral Festival from **Melissa Blunt**, who held the post for four years. Brinkman, an accomplished pianist and piano teacher, was the International Choral Festival office manager in 2009 and 2013, and has volunteered at the festival since 1987. "I'm really excited and quite honored to be following in Melissa's footsteps," Brinkman told the *Missoulian*. "She ran a great festival last time and has been a great mentor." One of her key goals as she prepares for the next festival, slated for July 13-16, 2016, is to try to expand its demographics to younger audiences. Blunt will remain on the festival's board of directors, and says she looks forward to helping plan the 10th festival. Meanwhile, she is confident her successor "has both experience with the festival and the passion for it ... You need someone who knows what it takes to prepare for the festival."

– From the *Missoulian*, Jan. 6

Welcome to **Ginny Abbott**, the new executive director at the Helena Symphony. "I was looking for a position in a well-respected non-profit institution that has a commitment to excellence, challenging goals, and a passion for a healthy quality of life," says Abbott. "I am thrilled to be able to work with one of the leading arts organizations in Montana." The new director relocated to Helena from Cleveland, where she has spent 25 years working as a non-profit consultant and fundraiser throughout Ohio. For nearly seven years, she served as the director of development for the Cleveland Music School Settlement, where she raised more than \$7.5 million. In addition, she served as director of alumni affairs and assistant director of campaign affairs for Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, and was the assistant to the director of development and public relations at Health Hill Hospital for Children. She was selected after an 18-month search, and takes the helm from interim Executive Director **Pat Calbeck Harper**, who helped the symphony retire all long-term debt, move to new office space, and restructure much of the staff. Harper will remain on the staff as the new director of Patron Services.



Ginny Abbott
(Photo by Eliza Wiley/ Independent Record)

Welcome to **Ben Nordlund**, the new director of the Yellowstone County Museum in Billings. Formerly the museum's collection manager, he took over at the beginning of the year, replacing **Chas Weldon**, who retired after six years as director. "Ben was an incredibly astute intern," Weldon told the *Billings Gazette*. "Ben knows the collection inside and out. That is so important. A good man is on the job." Nordlund, who began as an intern under the museum's former collections manager before moving into that job, concentrated on the storage and identification of artifacts. He also digitized more than 5,000 photographs in the collections. The Billings native attended The University of Montana in Missoula and earned a bachelor's degree in history from Montana State University Billings.

– From the *Billings Gazette*, Jan. 23

Welcome to **Kelly Everitt**, who recently joined the staff at the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings as the new registrar. Everitt, a native of Kingsport, TN, joins the YAM team after serving as a collections technician for the Invertebrate Zoology Department at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Prior to that, she was the curator and exhibits manager at "Titanic: The Experience" in Orlando, FL, for 13 years. She earned her bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Central Florida and her master's degree in museum studies from the University of Leicester, England. Her other interests include snowboarding and theatre. Her enthusiasm for the region lured her to her current position, in which she is responsible for the management, documentation and care of the museum's collection of nearly 7,400 contemporary and historic art objects, and archival materials.

So long and best wishes to **Sandra Hawke**, who retired Dec. 31 after 25 years as marketing and sales director at MetraPark in Billings.



Sandra Hawke

Hawke, who spent much of the past year away from her duties while being treated for ovarian cancer, told the *Billings Gazette* that she's now cancer free after months of treatment and recovering well. But the experience prompted her to step back. "Right now, I just want to be well and breathe easy for a while," she said. During her tenure, Hawke helped bring acts such as Metallica, The Eagles, Neil Diamond, Elton John and Garth Brooks to MetraPark, as well as coordinating trade shows, sporting events, MontanaFair and other events. Bill Dutcher, MetraPark's general manager, noted that Hawke is well known and well respected for her work. "Sandy

has been at the forefront of female fair executives in the fair business internationally for 25 years," he told the *Gazette*. "To see that she's so highly thought of and how many friends she has there, holy smokes."

– From the *Billings Gazette*, Nov. 28